

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance are requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1-5, 7-10, and 12-17 have been amended to merely clarify embodiments of the present invention. New claims 17-20 are added to more fully recite the claimed invention and are patentable for reasons commensurate with the other pending claims asserted herein. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1, 7 and 20 are independent.

Claims 1-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Block et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,377,938; hereafter “Block”) in view of Alfred (U.S. Patent No. 6,393,275). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection because the cited references, taken alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest the combination of features of independent claims 1 and 7 and their respective dependent claims.

For example, the cited prior art fails to teach or suggest at least the following features of claim 1 and its dependent claims:

forming a subscriber billing group, the subscriber billing group comprising two or more subscriber billing accounts;

assigning to each subscriber of the subscriber billing group an identification associated with at least one type of access right; and

indicating on the basis of the access right, different rights to manage accounts of the subscriber billing group and to carry out predetermined procedures in or between the accounts of the subscriber billing group.

Similarly, the cited prior art fails to teach or suggest at least the following features of claim 7 and its dependent claims:

one or more subscriber billing groups, wherein each subscriber billing group comprising two or more subscriber billing accounts,

access right indicators, each indicating a specific right to manage accounts of the subscriber billing group and to carry out predetermined procedures in or between the accounts of the subscriber billing group,

an identification for each subscriber, wherein the identification is associated with at least one access right indicator; and

data processing means for carrying out the account managing and the predetermined procedures.

Block merely discloses that, based on account information, a determination is made whether a subscriber has a sufficient balance for a desired service (Abstract). In the event of an insufficient balance or an overrun (e.g., Figure 3d, step 3035), a telephone call is denied. Further, Block is directed to calculating charges (column 2, line 65), eliminating delivery of hard copy invoices (column 3, lines 5-6), and controlling who is authorized to charge services to an account (column 3, lines 15-17 and column 28, lines 39-48). However, Block fails to teach or disclose any of the features of claims 1 and 7 identified above.

Alfred fails to remedy the deficiencies of Block because Alfred merely discloses a cellular extension service using a single line (a parent) and multiple cellular telephone sets (extensions), wherein cellular telephones are configured to share a cellular telephone line number (column 1, header and lines 27-32). Both the parent (112 in Figure 1) and the extensions (114, 122 in Figure 1) can have their own billing information (308 for 112, 372 for 114, and 392 for 122; see, e.g., Figure 3B, and column 3, lines 7-9; column 4, line 38). However, Alfred fails to teach or disclose any of the features of claims 1 and 7 identified above.

Therefore, the combined teachings of Block and Alfred fail to teach, disclose, or suggest any of the features of claims 1 and 7 identified above.

For at least the above reasons, Applicant respectfully submits that the Office Action has not established a prima facie case of obviousness of claims 1 and 7 and claims 2-6 and 8-17 that respectively depend therefrom. Therefore, the prior art rejections should be withdrawn.

All objections and rejections having been addressed, Applicant requests issuance of a notice of allowance indicating the allowability of all pending claims. If anything further is necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, Applicant requests that the Examiner contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Please charge any fees associated with the submission of this paper to Deposit Account Number 033975. The Commissioner for Patents is also authorized to credit any over payments to the above-referenced Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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